girls who code

Agency in the Age of AI: A National Study on Girls and Ethical Technology

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI)[1] is reshaping how young people learn, create, communicate, and make sense of the world around them. The ethical questions the technology raises — about fairness, privacy, accountability, bias, safety, and environmental impact — are no longer confined to academic or policy debate. Instead, they are playing out in real time across classrooms, on social media platforms, and in the day-to-day lives of young people.[2]

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in these spaces, it is essential to understand the values and judgments young people bring to it and whether they believe they have a role in shaping its future. These questions are particularly important for girls, who have historically been underrepresented in the development of technology despite being deeply affected by the systems it creates.

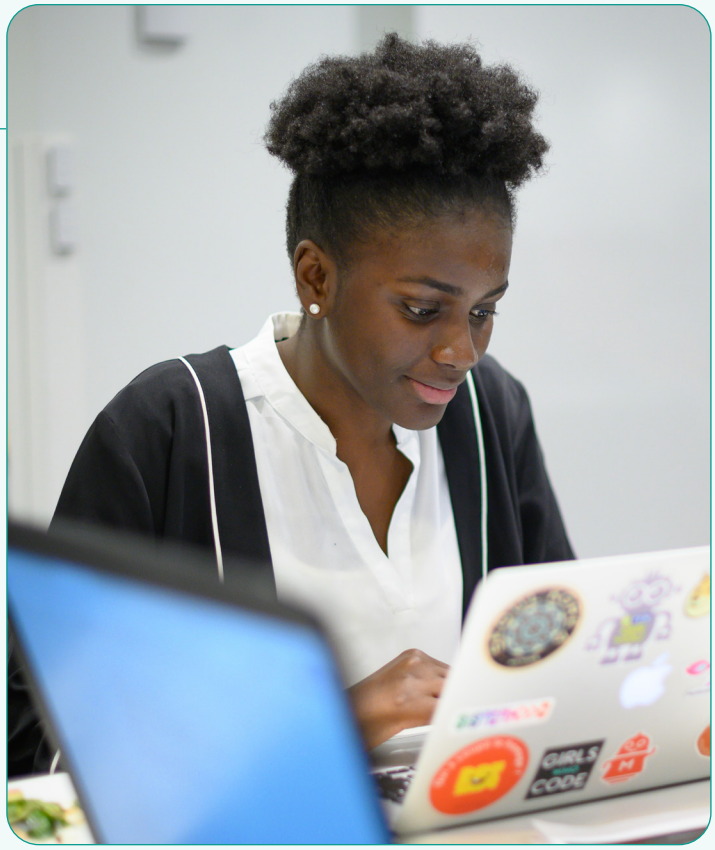
To help address this gap, Girls Who Code (GWC) conducted a national survey of 2,328 teens ages 13 to 18 in spring 2026, including general population teen girls and boys, as well as GWC alumni.[3] The study paid particular attention to how girls use AI, what they believe responsible AI means, how they evaluate the companies building it, and whether they believe they can influence its development. This research is groundbreaking. It is among the first of its kind to center girls' ethical values, concerns, and sense of agency in relation to AI.

What we found is striking. Girls are bringing critical judgment and ethical values to what has quickly become the defining technology of their generation. They approach AI with discernment and are developing clear standards for how they believe it should be used. They are also making deliberate judgments about when AI is helpful, when it introduces unacceptable risks, and where it belongs in their lives.

At the same time, one of the clearest patterns in our research is the importance of agency: the belief that what girls think and do can actually shape AI's future. Girls with a strong sense of agency engage with AI more than their peers, both male and female. Agency is also closely associated with the actions girls take around AI, from speaking up at school to giving feedback to AI companies.

The opportunity, then, is to foster both sides of this equation: to encourage girls to embrace their discernment while strengthening their sense of agency. In doing so, we help ensure this generation of girls remains at the center of the technological transformation that will shape their lives. These and other key findings are summarized below.

Key Findings



1

Girls are engaging ethically with AI and using it with discernment

While awareness of AI is nearly universal among teens, girls report lower daily use than their male peers. Rather than viewing this as an engagement deficit, our findings suggest that it instead reflects girls' critical discernment about how and when to engage AI tools; a discernment that is shaped by caution, ethical consideration, and genuine concern about the personal and societal impact of these tools. Further, this discernment is a key part of AI readiness. As employers begin to define AI fluency in terms of judgment and evaluation, girls' discernment should be recognized as a strength and an emerging workplace skill.

2

When girls have agency, the gender gap closes

Agency is strongly associated with how girls engage with AI. Girls with high agency — those who believe they have power when it comes to AI's future — are more likely than boys to use AI regularly, see its potential, evaluate it critically, and take action. In contrast, girls with low agency are not only less engaged with the technology, but also less likely to believe they can influence AI companies, school policies, or the people around them. Building agency, not just awareness or access, may be one of the most effective ways to prepare girls to participate in the future of AI.

3

Girls Who Code alumni are advocates for responsible AI.

GWC alumni report the strongest ethical commitments and clearest boundaries around AI use in the study, showing that AI literacy requires more than technical familiarity. Compared with peer girls, they are more likely to evaluate AI companies based on substantive trust signals like privacy, transparency, accountability, clear rules, and responsiveness to user feedback. They are also more likely to act on their values in ways that are close to their daily lives and believe young people should have a voice in how AI tools are developed. Together, these findings show what AI education can make possible: capable users of AI tools who are also advocates for responsible technology.

Key Findings

4

Ages 13 to 16 are a critical window for building girls' agency with AI.

Compared to girls ages 13 to 16, girls ages 17 to 18 report lower AI use, trust, and perceptions of AI's helpfulness across several measures. At the same time, older girls report stronger ethical commitments, are less responsive to many of the supports that could build agency, and the share who say they cannot make a difference in how AI tools are built and used nearly doubles. Together, these age-group differences suggest that older girls may be seeing AI's stakes more clearly while feeling less able to shape its direction, underscoring the importance of reaching girls during the early-to-mid teen years and keeping pathways to influence visible as they get older.

5

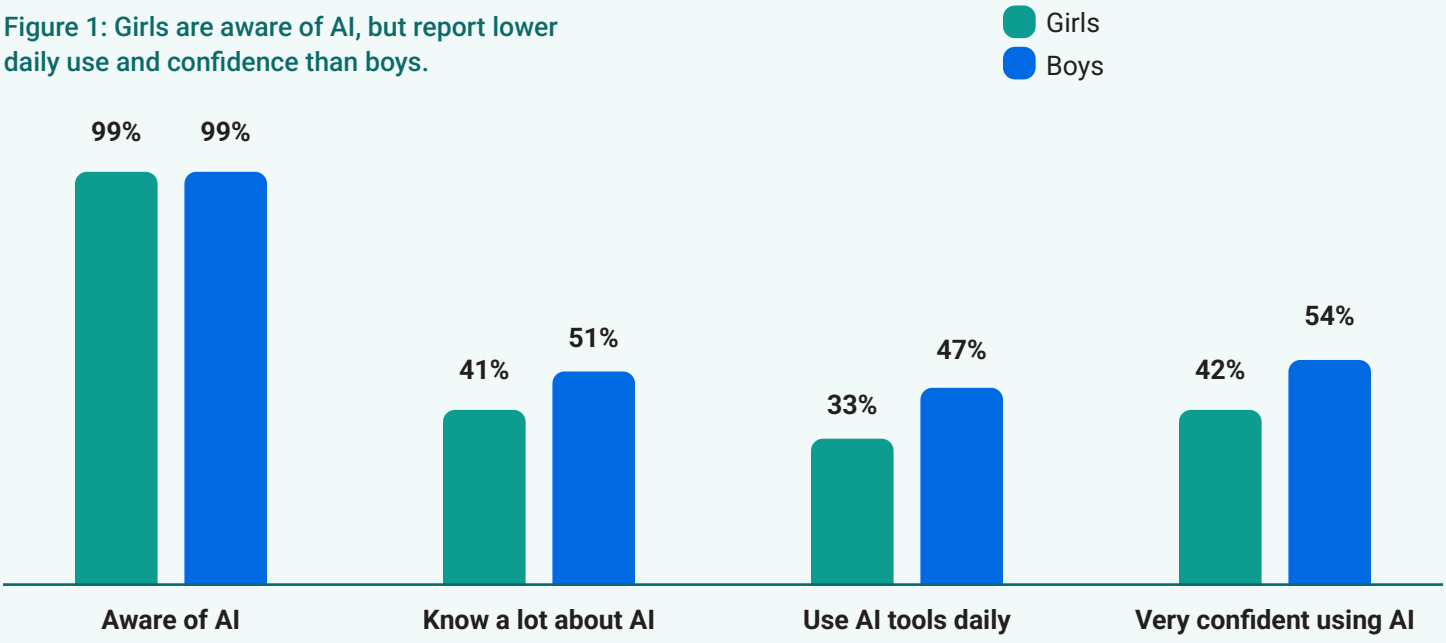
Schools are the central site of tension in girls' experiences with AI, but they are not where they are forming their views.

Girls report greater concern about AI at school than in any other setting, describing pressure around cheating accusations, inconsistent rules, and uncertainty about what responsible use actually means in the classroom. Yet social media, not school, is the dominant force shaping what girls think about AI. This points to a clear gap: the place where girls most acutely experience AI's impact is not where they are most often learning how to make sense of it. Closing this gap will require schools to teach about the risks and benefits of AI, as well as partner with students to set clear, fair, and inclusive expectations around AI use.

Finding 1: Girls' adoption of AI is grounded in ethics and discernment

While nearly all teen girls are aware of AI, they consistently report lower usage and confidence than their male peers. One-third (33%) of girls report using AI tools daily compared to 47% of boys, and 42% rate themselves as very confident when using AI tools compared to 54% of boys.

Figure 1: Girls are aware of AI, but report lower daily use and confidence than boys.



Note: Base sizes vary by measure. Awareness and self-reporting knowledge: Girls N=955, Boys N=925. Daily use and confidence: Girls N=940, Boys N=918

At first glance, this looks like a familiar gender gap. The rest of the data tell a more complicated story.

In their daily lives, girls and boys use AI in many of the same ways. Across genders, young people most commonly use AI to look up information, get support with schoolwork, and generate creative content. One notable difference is that boys are significantly more likely to use AI for social or emotional purposes (63% of boys compared to 56% of girls), a category that includes getting advice, chatting for fun, and seeking emotional support.

To contextualize girls' lower use, it is necessary to understand the ethical values shaping their engagement. When asked about the core values that define responsible AI, girls place especially high importance on privacy. Compared to their male peers, girls hold AI to a higher standard across nearly every value, including safety, fairness, accountability, and respect for human creativity. These are not simply personal preferences. They are the building blocks of responsible AI literacy.[4]

Further, when asked to make tradeoffs in their own AI use, girls consistently prioritize protection over convenience. For example, they are

How do girls define responsible AI?

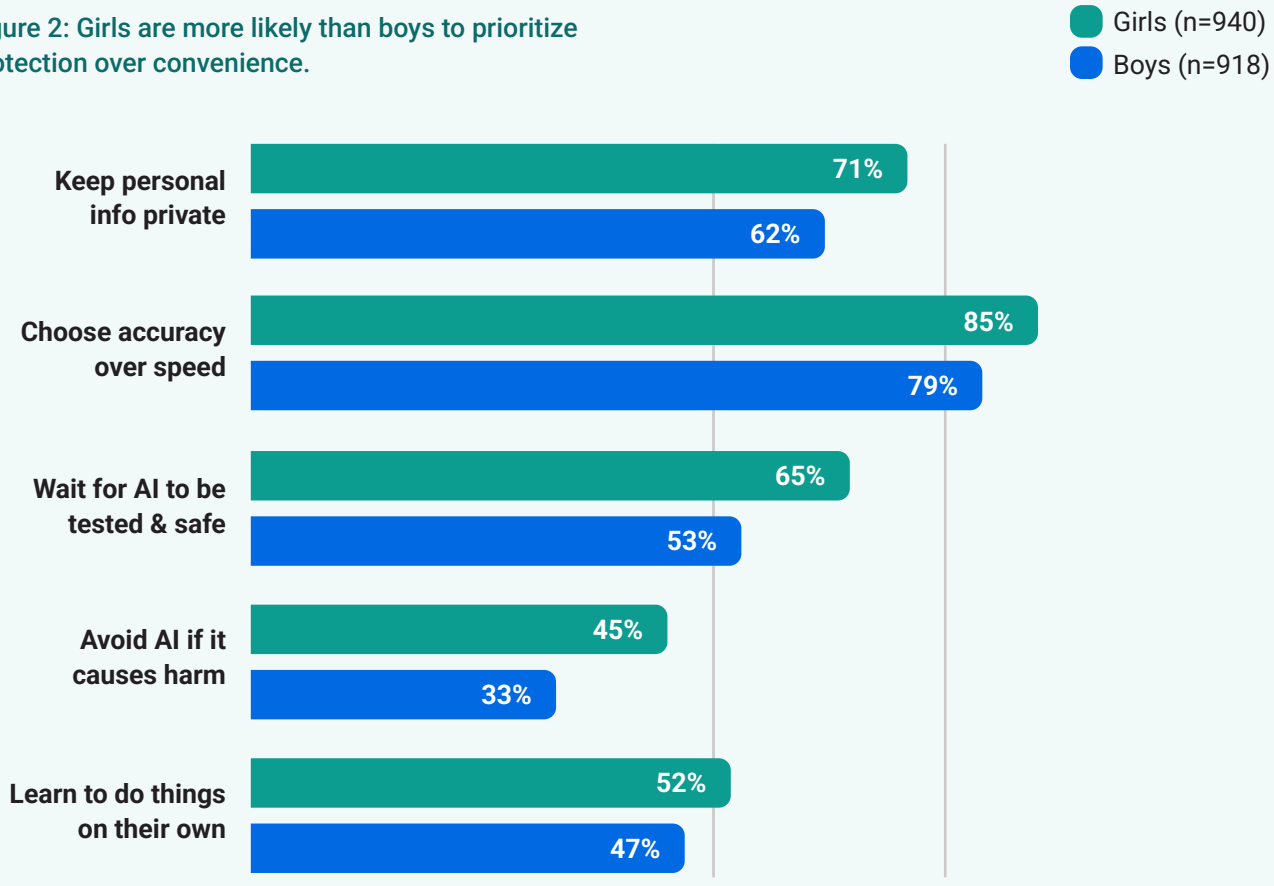
Help, not handoff. Girls describe responsible AI as support for their own thinking, not a substitute for it. They are open to using AI, but want it to be accurate, unbiased, and protective of their privacy. Their answers echo core principles in global AI ethics frameworks while making one thing clear: learning, judgment, and ownership should stay with them.[5]

"AI being used in a good or responsible way means that you are using it as a tool and not a replacement for your own work. It's there to help you and to help you learn new things, but it shouldn't do everything for you."

significantly more likely than boys to choose keeping personal information private over receiving a more personalized answer. This pattern holds across multiple scenarios: girls are more likely to choose accuracy over speed, safety over innovation, and independent learning over assisted learning. They are also more likely to avoid AI tools if they believe those tools have a negative impact on society or the environment.

This caution, though, does not mean girls reject AI's potential. Seventy-five percent of girls believe learning to use AI responsibly is important for their future, and 62% think AI systems or tools are helpful for solving problems in society. These findings suggest that girls' lower AI use is not disengagement, but rather discernment.

Figure 2: Girls are more likely than boys to prioritize protection over convenience.



Percentage choosing the protective option over the convenient one

They are centering their own values in choosing when to use or avoid AI tools, as well as considering the impacts and potential of the technology when making those decisions.

This discernment matters beyond girls' current AI use. As AI becomes more embedded in school, work, and daily decision making, fluency increasingly depends on human judgment. Employers are already beginning to look for workers who can use AI thoughtfully, evaluate its outputs, recognize its risks, and understand where human judgment should remain in control.[6] Girls' ability to see AI's possibilities without losing sight of accuracy, privacy, bias, safety, accountability, and societal impact is a critical strength and an emerging skill to be nurtured.

When AI causes harm, girls experience it differently, and girls of color feel it most.

While girls and boys both identify having had a negative experience with an AI tool (59% of girls and 58% of boys), what differs is how girls experience those harms. Girls express significantly higher concern than boys about the most personal AI risks: having their private information misused, being falsely accused of cheating, becoming dependent on AI, and losing creative or job opportunities to it. Additionally, nearly one in three girls reports having worried about getting in trouble for using an AI tool, compared to one in four boys.

Open-ended responses further revealed the gendered shape of those concerns: inconsistent enforcement of AI rules at school, deepfake abuse with female targets and male perpetrators, algorithmic bias in resume screening, and content moderation systems that misread or misrepresent them. All of which compound inequities rather than correct them.

For girls from historically underrepresented groups, these concerns are sharper still. Compared to their peers, they express significantly higher concern across nearly every measure of systemic AI risk: personal information misuse (+14 points), surveillance (+10 points), and algorithmic bias (+10 points). These findings reflect lived experience with systems that have historically underserved or actively harmed communities of color, and girls are connecting those dots clearly and confidently.

What makes this finding particularly important is that these same underrepresented girls are also significantly more optimistic about AI's potential. They see the highest possibility for AI to support learning, creativity, career exploration, and connection — alongside the highest awareness of its risks.

Finding 2: Agency is strongly associated with how girls engage with and act on AI

Girls' ethical discernment is clear in the data. The next question is how that discernment relates to continued engagement and action. The data point to a central factor: agency.

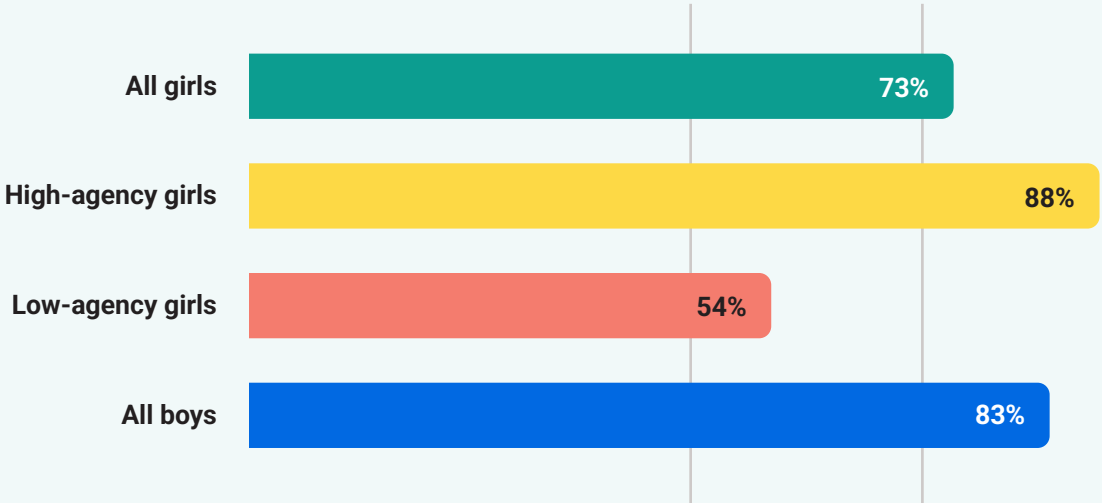
In this research, agency refers to whether girls believe they can use AI in alignment with their values, influence how people around them use AI, affect AI companies through their choices as consumers, and see themselves involved in AI-related work or decisions in the future.[7] Girls who agreed with three or four of these agency-related statements were classified as "high-agency," while girls who agreed with one or none were classified as "low-agency." This measure revealed one of the clearest patterns in the study: girls' sense of agency is strongly associated with how they use AI, how they evaluate it, and whether they act on their beliefs.

Across the full sample, girls report lower perceived influence over AI than boys. Boys are more likely than girls to say they can use AI in line with their values, influence how people around them use it, affect AI companies through consumer choices, and see themselves involved in AI-related decisions in the future. Girls are also less likely than boys to believe people their age are taken seriously in conversations about AI.

However, when we segment girls by their sense of agency, a different picture emerges. High-agency girls report higher regular AI use than boys (88% compared to 83%). They are also more likely than boys to agree that young people should have a say in how AI tools are developed and that learning how to use AI responsibly is important for their future.

Figure 3: When girls have agency, the gender gap closes.

Share using AI tools frequently (top-two-box, respondents who use AI tools daily or several times a week)



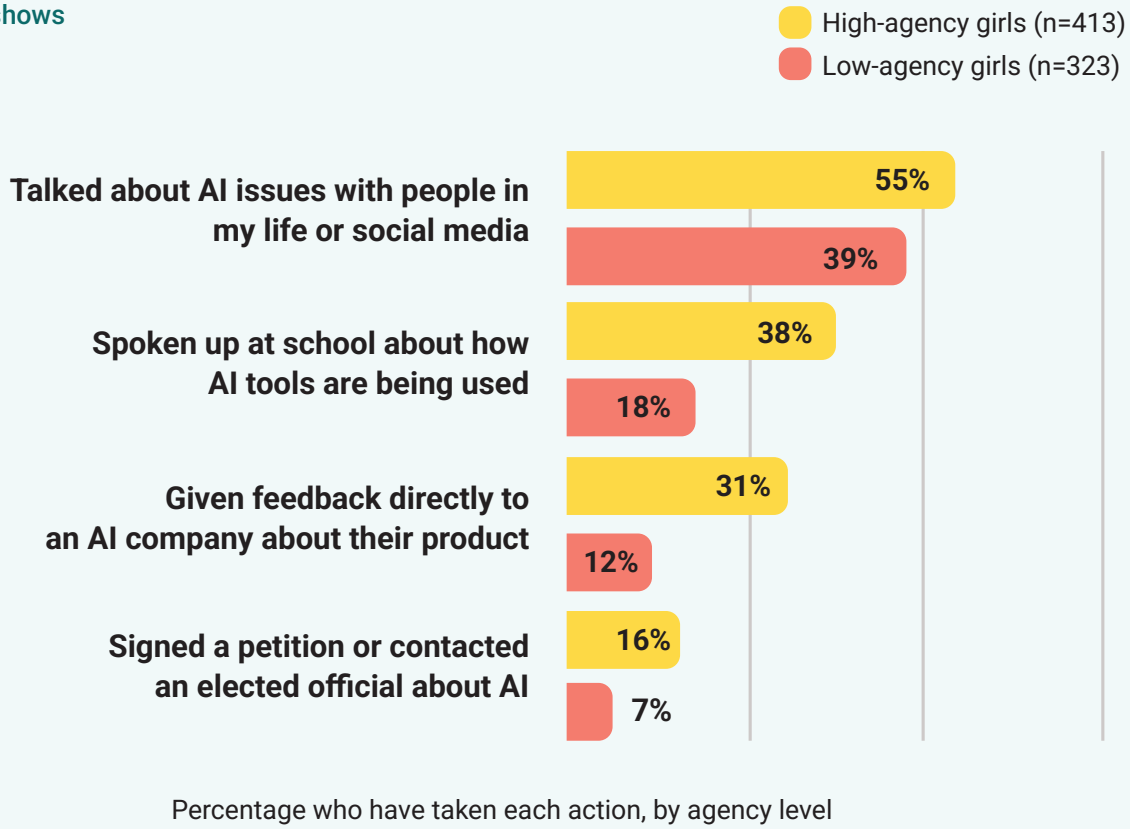
High/Low agency defined by agreement with 3-4 vs 0-1 of four agency statements

Agency also shapes how girls see AI's potential. High-agency girls are significantly more likely than low-agency girls to view AI as helpful across every area tested, including learning, doing schoolwork, managing everyday tasks, being creative, exploring career options, getting mental health support, connecting with others, and solving problems in society. This does not mean high-agency girls are less critical of AI. Rather, it suggests that agency allows girls to hold two ideas at once: AI can be useful, and AI must be governed by clear values.

This distinction matters. Without agency, caution can become withdrawal. Low-agency girls are less likely to see AI as helpful and more likely to say they are unsure of what makes an AI company trustworthy. That uncertainty suggests that low agency is not just a matter of confidence. It may also reflect a lack of a framework for evaluating AI systems and defining what responsible technology should look like.

Agency is also closely tied to action. Girls who feel they have a voice in AI's future are more likely to act on it. They are more likely to talk about AI issues with people in their lives or on social media, speak up at school about how AI tools are being used, give feedback directly to an AI company, or take formal action through a petition, campaign, or elected official.

Figure 4: Agency shows up in action.



Percentage who have taken each action, by agency level

In other words, agency is not abstract. Girls with a stronger sense of agency are also more likely to see action as realistic for them, and their ethical concern is more often paired with participation. The relationship between agency and action offers a promising intervention opportunity to help girls turn questions about AI into action within the institutions and communities where AI is already affecting their lives.

This study also found what girls need in order to build that agency. Approximately half of all girls said seeing examples of how young people have influenced technology decisions would make them feel more prepared to influence how AI tools are built and used. Forty-six percent said they want clear ways to give feedback to AI companies. These findings show that girls are not asking only for more information about AI. They are asking for proof that young people can matter in decisions about technology, as well as practical channels that make participation possible.

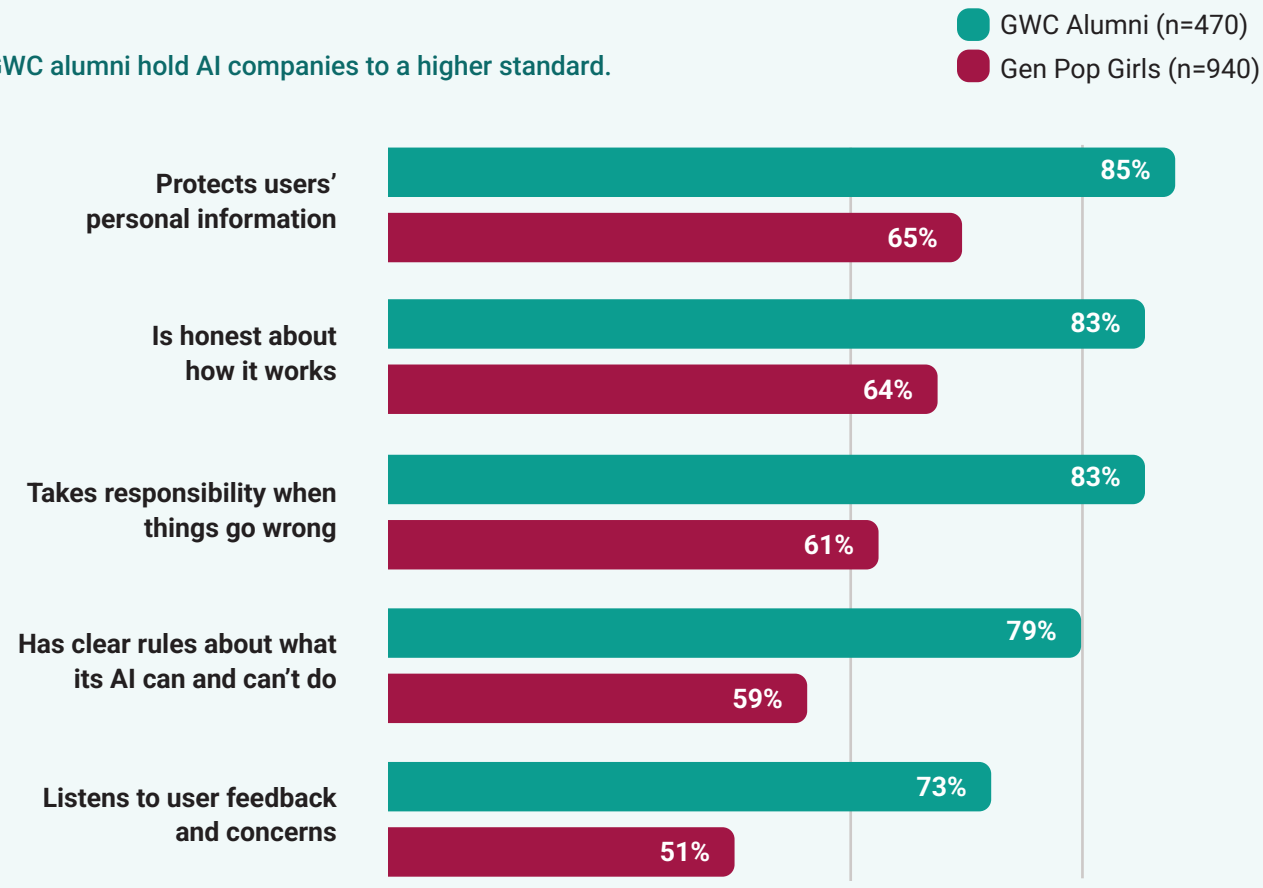
There is an opportunity to show girls the path from discernment to influence. With the right support, they can move from questioning tools and setting personal boundaries to shaping how AI is used and defining what responsible, ethical AI looks like in practice.

Finding 3: Girls Who Code alumni offer a powerful example of what AI education can make possible

AI literacy involves more than technical familiarity. It also requires evaluation and discernment: the instinct to question whether a tool deserves your trust, not simply the skill to operate it. Responsible AI education should help young people ask whether an AI tool is accurate, fair, safe, transparent, and protective of personal data. It should also teach them to recognize where human judgment and creativity must remain in control. Throughout the study, GWC alumni reported the strongest ethical commitments and clearest boundaries around AI use, demonstrating that educational programs can teach young people to be advocates for responsible AI, not simply capable users of it.

This advocacy is especially clear in how GWC alumni evaluate AI companies. Compared with peer girls, GWC alumni are much more likely to say that an AI company feels trustworthy when it protects users' personal information, is honest about how its AI works, takes responsibility when things go wrong, sets clear rules for what its AI can and cannot do, and listens to user feedback and concerns. These are substantive expectations around privacy, transparency, accountability, safety, and voice.

Figure 5: GWC alumni hold AI companies to a higher standard.



What makes an AI company feel trustworthy

Percentage selecting each as a trust criterion

This pattern also challenges a common assumption about AI education: that greater exposure to technology should naturally lead to more expansive use. Among GWC alumni, technical familiarity appears alongside sharper boundaries. They place a high priority on core ethical principles, with nearly 90% saying both privacy and safety are very important when it comes to AI. They also show strong boundaries around AI's role in daily life. The majority see AI as helpful for learning (70%), career exploration (66%), and schoolwork (64%), while drawing clearer lines around human-centered domains such as creativity, emotional support, and connection with others. GWC alumni are not only asking whether AI works. They are asking where it belongs.

That kind of judgment is central to the broader promise of responsible AI education. GWC alumni show how technical learning can be paired with discernment, and how that discernment can move into action.

More than half have chosen not to use an AI tool because of privacy or ethical concerns, about one-third have spoken up at school about how AI tools are being used, and about two-thirds have talked about AI issues with people in their lives or on social media.

At a time when young people are often treated primarily as AI users, these behaviors show why girls should also be understood as evaluators, advocates, and future builders.

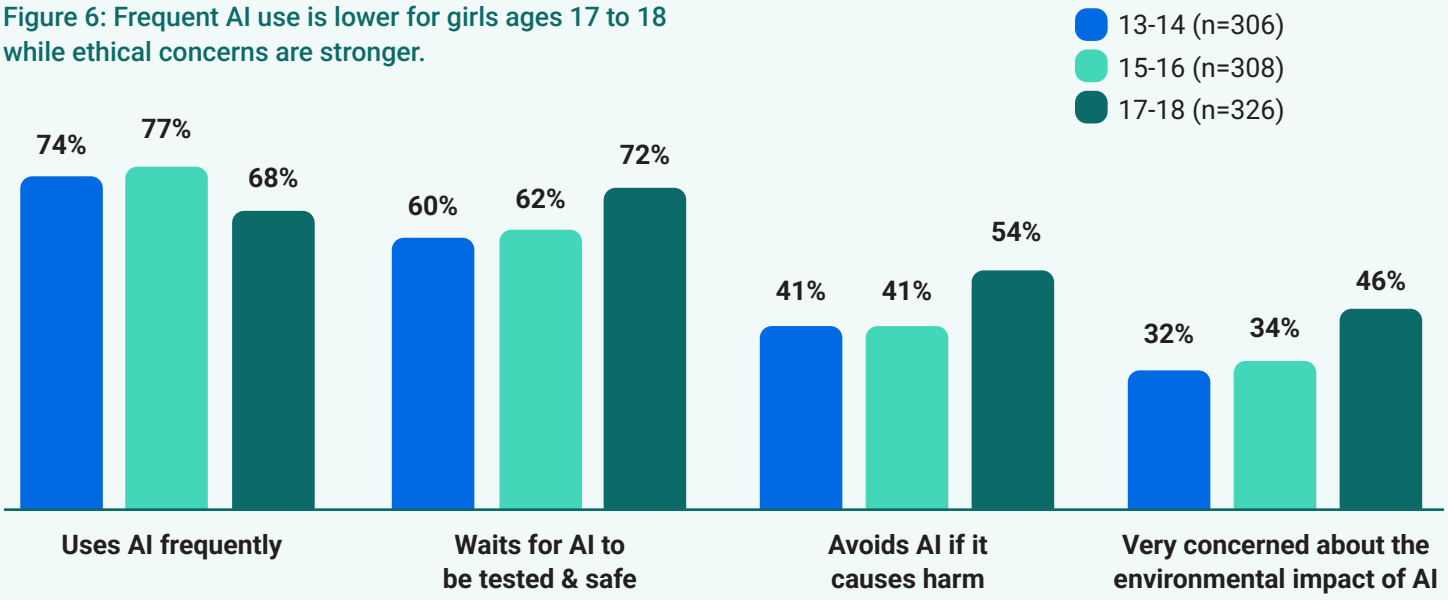
Together, these findings suggest that programs like GWC can help girls learn about responsible AI and translate their views into practice. GWC alumni show that girls can engage with AI in ways that are technically informed, ethically grounded, and oriented toward action. Further, they point toward a broader vision for AI education: one that prepares young people to use and evaluate emerging technologies, while also helping shape the norms and values that govern them. Our findings also make clear that the timing of these types of interventions matters.

Finding 4: Ages 13 to 16 are a critical intervention window

This study identifies an important period for helping girls build both AI discernment and agency: ages 13 to 16.

Across several measures, girls ages 17 to 18 report a different relationship to AI than their younger peers. Frequent AI use is lower among girls ages 17 to 18 than among girls 13 to 16, while trust in AI companies and perceptions of AI's helpfulness also are lower across several measures. At the same time, girls ages 17 to 18 show stronger ethical commitments. They are more likely than their younger peers to prioritize safety over rapid innovation, and more likely to say they would avoid AI if it has negative social or environmental impacts.

Figure 6: Frequent AI use is lower for girls ages 17 to 18 while ethical concerns are stronger.



This is not the first time GWC research has pointed to the early-to-mid teen years as a critical intervention window. In our national study on girls and cybersecurity, girls' interest in cybersecurity learning and careers peaked around ages 15 to 16 before declining in their late teens. That finding also echoed earlier GWC and Accenture research on the "middle school cliff," the period when girls' interest in computer science declines sharply while boys' interest grows.[8] Together, these findings point to early-to-mid adolescence as a priority time period to engage girls with computer science and emerging technologies.

This study adds an important new dimension to this pattern. Older girls do not appear to be simply less interested in AI. Rather, they may be seeing the stakes more clearly while feeling less able to shape the technology's direction.

At ages 17 to 18, girls are significantly less responsive to nearly every kind of support that would make them feel more prepared to influence how AI tools are built and used, and the share who say "I cannot make a difference" nearly doubles, from 8% among younger girls to 14%.

That combination presents a critical risk. Compared with younger girls, older girls report stronger ethical concerns alongside a lower sense of influence. This pattern suggests that older girls may be more aware of AI's risks while being less likely to see a role for themselves in shaping its future. This makes the 13-to-16 window especially important, while also signaling that support for older girls may need to focus on making pathways for influence feel visible, realistic, and within reach.

Finding 5: Schools are where girls feel AI's pressure, but not where they form their views

If ages 13 to 16 represent the critical window for building responsible AI literacy and agency, schools are one of the most important places where that work must happen. They are also one of the places where girls are already feeling the consequences of unclear AI norms most acutely.

When asked where they feel most concerned about AI being used, girls point to school more than any other setting. In their own words, girls describe a pattern of AI policies that vary by teacher, AI detection tools that flag honest work, and the constant pressure of knowing that peers may be using AI to get ahead while they choose not to.

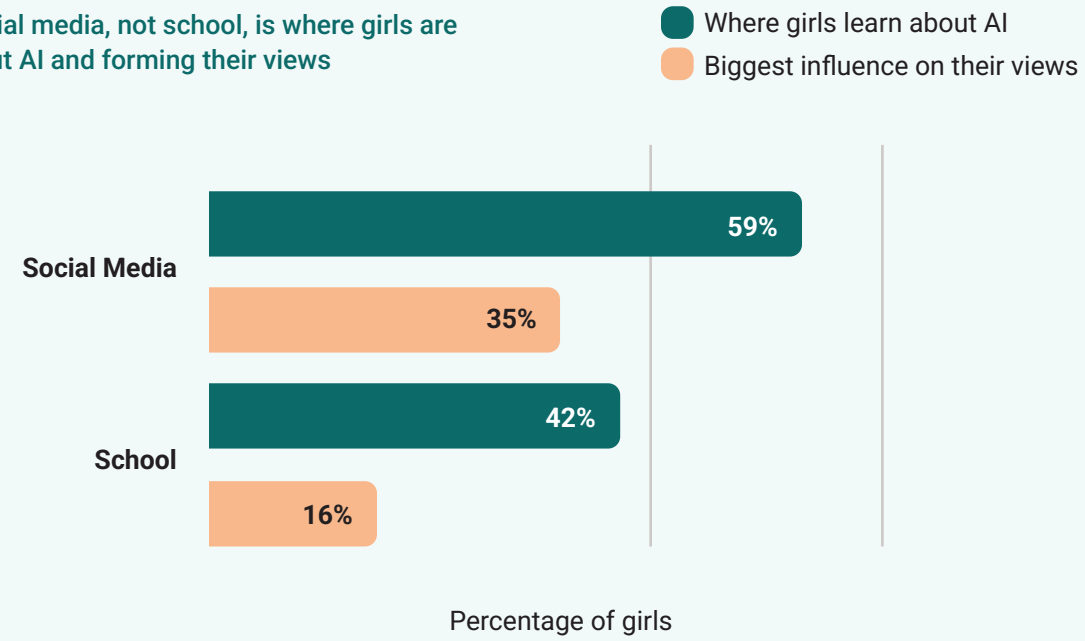
Despite being the setting that generates the most immediate pressures, school is not where girls form their views about AI. When asked which source has the biggest influence on what they actually think about AI, only 16% of girls named school. Social media, by contrast, drives both where girls mainly learn about AI (59%) and what they ultimately think about it (35%). Additionally, this gap is larger among older girls: for those ages 13 to 14, 30% say social media shapes their AI views; for those ages 17 to 18, that share climbs to 42%.

What do girls wish adults understood about their AI experience?

Beyond restrictions. Girls are asking for guidance, fair rules, and adults who recognize that AI is already part of how they learn. They want clear expectations, protection from false accusations, and a voice in shaping the rules that affect them.

"Adults often assume that having access to AI makes school 'easy' or that we are all just using it to cheat. What they don't see is the added anxiety it creates—the constant fear of being falsely accused by AI detectors and the pressure to produce even higher-quality work because the 'bar' has been moved."

Figure 7: Social media, not school, is where girls are learning about AI and forming their views



The asymmetry matters. While schools are where AI concerns become most urgent for girls, the conversation that is actually shaping girls' understanding of AI is happening elsewhere, largely outside the reach of educators and institutions.

This gap is especially important because girls are asking for the kind of structured guidance schools are well positioned to provide. When asked what would help them feel more confident using AI, girls most often cited understanding AI's benefits and risks (48%) and learning more about how AI tools actually work (48%). In other words, girls are not only asking for permission. They are asking for accurate information, clearer judgment, and help making sense of a technology they are already encountering.

Leading organizations like GWC may have an important role to play in helping schools close that gap. There is an opportunity to build the digital literacy, critical-thinking skills, and responsible-use norms that girls are otherwise piecing together across social media, peer conversations, and their own experience.[9]

Conclusion: Giving Girls a Say in AI's Future

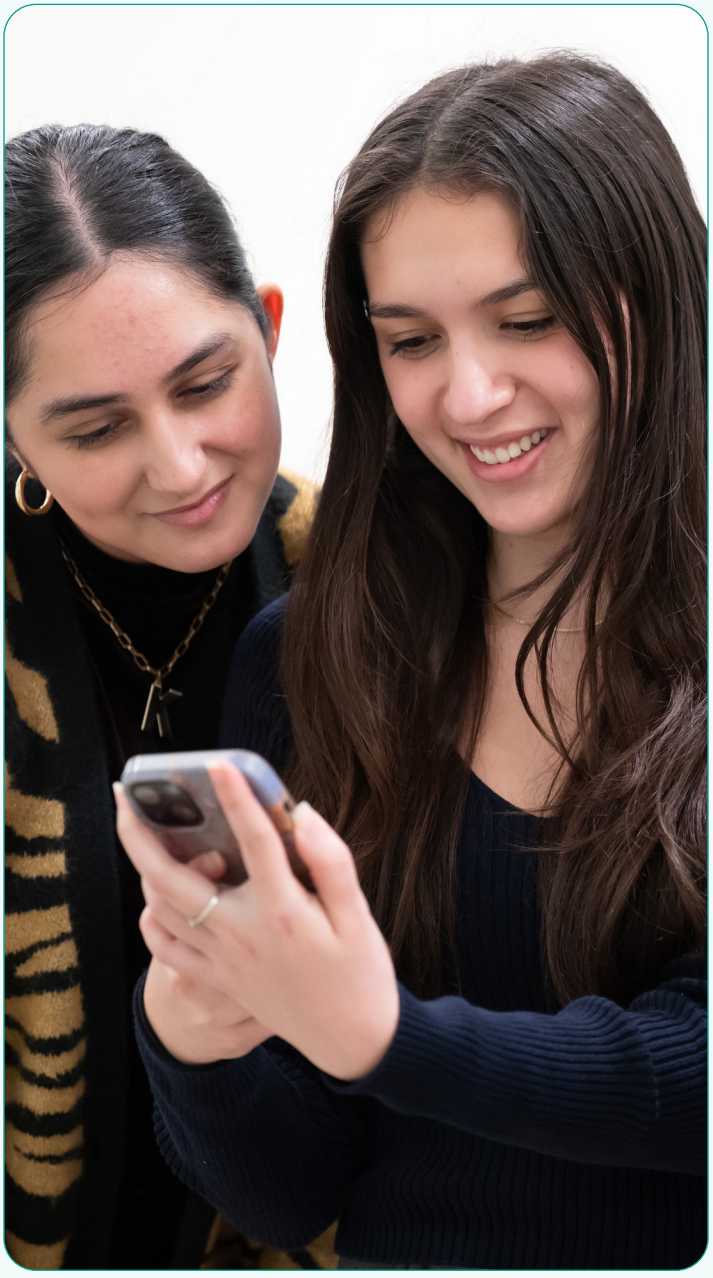
The study's central finding suggests that girls are bringing real discernment and ethical values to AI. They care about privacy, safety, fairness, accountability, and the role of human creativity. They are thinking carefully about when AI helps, when it causes harm, and who should be responsible when something goes wrong. These instincts are exactly the kinds of habits responsible AI demands, and are part of what AI readiness now requires.

The risk is that discernment without agency can turn into disengagement. When girls see AI's risks clearly but do not see meaningful ways to shape its future, they may begin to pull back from a technology that will influence their education, work, civic life, and creative expression. That is why agency matters so much. Girls need more than exposure to AI tools. They need confidence, language, examples, and channels that help them act on what they believe.

This study also shows that those supports can work. GWC alumni demonstrate what becomes possible when technical learning is paired with ethical values, discernment, and opportunities to share their voice. They hold AI companies to higher standards and draw clearer boundaries around AI use. They are also more likely to act on their values in ways close to their daily lives. Their responses point toward a broader vision for AI education: one that prepares young people to evaluate technology, challenge harmful uses, and help shape the norms that govern it.

The opportunity now is to build that vision earlier and more widely. Girls ages 13 to 16 are more receptive than older girls to many of the supports tested in this study, while girls ages 17 to 18 report stronger ethical concerns alongside lower responsiveness to those supports. This makes early-to-mid adolescence an important period for helping girls connect discernment with influence.

Ethical AI will require more than technical expertise. It will require people who can ask better questions, recognize harm, insist on accountability, and imagine technology in service of human needs. Girls are already developing that judgment. The next step is ensuring they have the agency, support, and pathways to use it.



Recommendations

For schools and educators:

1

Teach students to evaluate when, why, and how AI should be used. Girls already bring strong ethical considerations to their use of AI, placing particular importance on safety, privacy, accuracy, fairness, and human creativity. Responsible AI education should build on those instincts by helping students understand how AI systems work, evaluate outputs and limitations, identify bias, and understand data privacy. This includes giving students opportunities to examine real-world scenarios, weigh competing values, identify when AI can appropriately support their thinking, and recognize when human judgment should remain central.

2

Clarify how AI is used in your classroom and help students understand the reasoning. Schools are where many girls feel AI most personally, through inconsistent rules, cheating concerns, and uncertainty about responsible use. Schools can help address these challenges by providing structured, responsible AI education alongside clear and consistent expectations for its use. This could include classroom discussions about ethical AI, examples of responsible AI-supported learning, guidance on AI detectors and false accusations, and schoolwide norms that help students understand not only what is allowed, but why.

For youth-serving organizations and funders:

3

Make agency a core outcome of AI education. Agency is closely associated with the actions girls take around AI in their daily lives and also how they see the technology's potential. Youth-serving programs should prioritize cultivating that sense of agency by helping girls evaluate AI against their values, showing examples of young people influencing technology decisions, and giving opportunities for girls to use their judgment in public and practical ways. This could include youth-led AI ethics projects, student advisory groups, responsible AI design challenges, or opportunities for girls to present recommendations to educators, companies, and community leaders.

4

Prioritize the 13-to-16 window while tailoring support by age. Girls ages 13 to 16 are more receptive than girls ages 17 to 18 to nearly every support tested that could help them feel prepared to influence how AI tools are built and used. This presents a valuable opportunity for organizations and funders to invest during these years in workshops, mentorship, career exposure, hands-on projects, and leadership opportunities that help girls see themselves as people who can shape AI, not simply use it. Girls ages 17-18 have stronger ethical concerns, but their belief that they can make a difference declines. This suggests that older girls may need support that validates their concerns while helping them identify realistic ways to shape AI's future.

Recommendations

For technology companies and policymakers:

5

Invest in meaningful pathways for girls to influence and participate in AI's future.
Girls are asking for concrete opportunities to share their voice about AI, with nearly half saying that seeing examples of young people influencing technology decisions would help them feel more prepared to participate. Technology companies and policymakers should partner with youth-serving organizations, including GWC, to create youth advisory councils, product feedback sessions, policy roundtables, and other channels for girls to share their experiences and expectations with decision-makers. These mechanisms should make clear how young people's input is considered and where it can inform decisions.

About Girls Who Code

Girls Who Code is dedicated to closing the gender gap in technology, with the goal of reaching 5 million girls, women, and nonbinary individuals by 2030. Our mission is to inspire, educate, and champion girls, women, and nonbinary people, with a special focus on historically underrepresented groups, to become changemakers in tech. We are committed to increasing access to the technology field for all, equipping the next generation to thrive in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other transformative technologies shaping the 21st century.

Since launching in 2012, Girls Who Code has reached over 860,000 students through our in-person and virtual programming. Of these, 425,000 alumni are now college or career-aged, ready to lead in tech. Learn more at girlswhocode.com.

About Touchstone Research

Touchstone Research (TSR) is a full-service market research firm with over 30 years of expertise in engaging kids, teens, young adults, and other hard-to-reach audiences. TSR employs a wide range of COPPA-compliant methodologies, including online surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, discussion boards, UX testing, and insight communities, to deliver authentic and actionable insights. Leveraging innovative technologies and rigorous data quality controls, TSR empowers leading global brands, nonprofits, and educational organizations to make informed decisions with confidence. Learn more at touchstoneresearch.com.

Acknowledgments

Girls Who Code thanks Dr. Jean Ryoo, Director of Research of the Computer Science Equity Project at UCLA Center X, for reviewing this report and providing feedback.

Methodology

Data were collected via an online quantitative survey built and administered by Girls Who Code in collaboration with Touchstone Research. This survey was fielded from April 22, 2026 through May 18, 2026. The population included U.S. teenagers ages 13–18. The total sample of 2,328 respondents comprised two groups: 1,858 general population teens recruited from national online consumer panels and 470 Girls Who Code alumni recruited via email campaigns. The general population sample included 940 girls and other gender identities and 918 boys. The sample was evenly distributed across age groups and nationally representative by region and race/ethnicity. Differences described as “significant” in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Figures report the applicable base size for each analysis. Most analyses draw from the full sample of respondents or the general population sample, while some figures focus on specific subgroups.

References

1. Throughout this report, "AI" refers specifically to generative AI. In the survey, respondents were told that this includes tools they can interact with directly to create, answer questions, or generate something new, including text, images, code, or videos.

2. Pew Research Center (2026). "How Teens Use and View AI."

3. Online survey of U.S. teens ages 13-18 (N=2,328) administered by Touchstone Research, including nationally representative general population sample (n=1,858) and Girls Who Code alumni (n=470).

4. OECD (2024). OECD AI Principles. Adopted May 2019; updated May 2024.

5. National Institute of Standards and Technology (2023). "Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF 1.0)."

6. Harvard Business Review (2026). "Research: AI Is Changing What Employers Want from New Hires."

7. This framing aligns with global responsible AI principles that emphasize human-centered technology, public understanding, accountability, and meaningful human agency in how AI systems are developed and used. UNESCO (2021). "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence." Adopted by UNESCO's 193 Member States, November 2021.

8. Girls Who Code and the Cyber Education Alliance (2025). "Breaking Barriers: Girls and the Future of Cybersecurity." Accenture and Girls Who Code (2016). "Cracking the Gender Code."

9. This approach aligns with UNESCO's recommendation that public understanding of AI be promoted through education, civic engagement, digital skills, AI ethics training, and information literacy, as well as U.S. Department of Education guidance calling for AI policies that center students, educators, and families. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology (2023). "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning: Insights and Recommendations."